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on human rights of migrants
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INFORMATION AND COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS, UNITED NATIONS BODIES, SPECIALIZED AGENCIES, INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Report of the Secretary-General

ANNEX

Submission from Iceland
dated 5 February 1998

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Information concerning Migrant Workers in Iceland.

1. Latest figures or estimates for:
- Total population, including non-nationals, preferably by nationality of origin:

Population in Iceland 1 December 1997 by citizenship				
		Thereof		
		born in		
	Total	Iceland	Males	Females
Population total	**272.064**	**259.718**	**136.281**	**135.783**
Iceland	**266.503**	**258.972**	**133.977**	**132.526**
Nordic countries	**1.563**	**340**	**603**	**960**
Denmark	925	247	371	554
Finland	92	8	27	65
Norway	289	53	102	187
Sweden	257	32	103	154
Other Eur. countries	**2.312**	**164**	**1.017**	**1.295**
Albania	6	–	2	4
Austria	31	3	17	14
Belarus	2	–	2	–
Belgium	32	4	11	21
Bosnia-Herzegovina	20	2	9	11
Bulgaria	28	1	12	16
Croatia	49	2	20	29
Czech Republic	1	–	1	–
Czechoslovakia	20	2	11	9
Estonia	13	1	5	8
France	103	5	44	59

Georgia	3	–	–	3
Germany	301	34	87	214
Greece	5	–	3	2
Hungary	40	3	18	22
Ireland	37	6	22	15
Italy	27	–	17	10
Latvia	3	–	1	2
Lithuania	21	–	8	13
Macedonia	2	–	1	1
Malta	1	–	–	1
Netherlands	110	13	47	63
Poland	690	11	268	422
Portugal	70	3	43	27
Romania	10	–	6	4
Russia	88	9	36	52
Slovakia	11	1	6	5
Slovenia	7	–	3	4
Spain	73	11	39	34
Switzerland	28	4	10	18
U.S.S.R	10	1	4	6
Ukraine	15	1	4	11
United Kingdom	328	40	183	145
Yugoslavia	127	7	77	50
America	**765**	**194**	**377**	**388**
Argentina	3	–	1	2
Bolivia	5	–	2	3
Brazil	13	3	6	7
Canada	59	3	28	31
Chile	16	1	9	7
Colombia	15	–	5	10

Costa Rica	4	–	4	–
Cuba	3	–	1	2
Dominican Republic	2	–	–	2
Ecuador	7	1	2	5
Guatemala	3	–	1	2
Guyana	6	–	2	4
Hjamica	3	–	3	–
Honduras	7	–	7	–
Mexico	16	3	5	11
Peru	14	1	6	8
Triinidad and Tobago	1	–	1	–
United States	574	182	288	286
Uruguay	3	–	1	2
Venesuela	11	–	5	6
Africa	**130**	**5**	**78**	**52**
Algeria	10	–	8	2
Angola	2	–	–	2
Cape Verde	16	1	10	6
Egypt	5	–	4	1
Ethiopia	1	–	–	1
Gambia	2	–	–	2
Ghana	7	–	4	3
Guinea-Bissau	1	–	1	–
Kenya	2	–	1	1
Madagasgar	1	–	1	–
Mauritius	1	–	1	–
Morocco	29	–	22	7
Namibia	6	1	4	2
Nigeria	5	–	4	1
Sierra Leone	3	–	2	1

Somalia	1	–	1	–
South Africa	30	3	10	20
Tunisia	3	–	3	–
Uganda	1	–	–	1
Zair	1	–	1	–
Zambia	2	–	1	1
Zimbabwe	1	–	–	1
Asia	**734**	**38**	**221**	**513**
China	72	–	37	35
India	20	2	13	7
Indonesia	5	–	2	3
Iran	6	–	5	1
Iraq	4	–	3	1
Israel	6	–	3	3
Japan	19	–	5	14
Jordan	8	1	3	5
Kazakhstan	3	–	2	1
Kirgizia	1	–	–	1
Korea, Rep. of	2	–	2	–
Lebanon	2	–	2	–
Malaysia	4	–	3	1
Mongolia	5	–	3	2
Nepal	2	–	2	–
Pakistan	4	–	2	2
Philippines	210	11	49	161
Singapore	4	–	1	3
Sri Lanka	15	1	3	12
Syria	5	–	2	3
Taiwan	2	–	–	2
Thailand	289	22	63	226

Turkey	4	–	3	1
Vietnam	42	1	13	29
Oceania	**55**	**5**	**6**	**49**
Australia	28	3	3	25
New Zealand	27	2	3	24
Stateless	**2**	**–**	**2**	**–**
Source: Statistics Iceland				

- Number of nationals abroad, preferably by country of residence:

Icelandic citizens living abroad 1 December 1997			
according to the National Register			–
	Total	Males	Females
Population total	– **23.514**	**11.367**	**12.147**
Nordic countries	**15.438**	**7.793**	**7.645**
Denmark	6.228	3.137	3.091
Faroe Islands	178	97	81
Finland	– 127	70	57
Greenland	42	28	14
Norway	3.868	1.909	1.959
Sweden	4.995	2.552	2.443
Other Eur. countries	**3.052**	**1.436**	**1.616**
Austria	52	23	29
Belgium	63	27	36

Bosnia-Herzegovina	1	1	–
Bulgaria	2	1	1
Croatia	1	1	–
Czech Republic	1	1	–
Czechoslovakia	2	2	–
Estonia	1	1	–
France	230	99	131
Germany	789	408	381
Gibraltar	4	2	2
Greece	23	10	13
Hungary	2	2	–
Ireland	12	8	4
Italy	81	34	47
Latvia	2	2	–
Lithuania	4	3	1
Luxemburg	348	186	162
Malta	3	2	1
Monaco	5	3	2
Netherlands	219	92	127
Poland	7	6	1
Portugal	23	9	14
Russia	6	5	1
Slovenia	3	1	2
Spain	126	58	68
Switzerland	137	60	77
Ukraine	1	1	–
United Kingdom	902	387	515
Yugoslavia	2	1	1
America	**4.327**	**1.717**	**2.610**
America, unspec.	10	5	5

Argentina	1	1	–
Aruba	1	1	–
Bahamas	5	3	2
Brazil	10	7	3
Canada	434	203	231
Chile	23	15	8
Colombia	1	1	–
Costa Rica	1	–	1
Honduras	4	1	3
Jamaica	1	–	1
Mexico	16	7	9
Panama	2	1	1
Peru	2	1	1
Puerto Rico	1	1	–
St.Vincent and the Grenadines	1	1	–
United States	3.814	1.469	2.345
Africa	**90**	**63**	**27**
Africa unspec.	3	2	1
Angola	3	3	–
Asia	**177**	**112**	**65**
Bahrain	4	1	3
Bangaldesh	1	1	–
China	7	3	4
Cyprus	30	20	10
Djibouti	2	–	2
Egypt	9	7	2
Ethiopia	2	2	–
Ghana	3	1	2
Hong Kong	10	5	5

India	12	4	8
Indonesia	11	10	1
Iran	2	2	–
Israel	14	8	6
Japan	21	15	6
Jordan	6	2	4
Kenya	2	2	–
Korea, Rep. of	1	–	1
Kuwait	1	1	–
Lebanon	4	2	2
Malaysia	2	2	–
Mauritius	1	1	–
Morocco	1	1	–
Namibia	21	15	6
Nigeria	5	2	3
Oman	3	2	1
Philippines	4	3	1
Reunion	2	2	–
Sao Tome and Principe	1	1	–
Saudi Arabia	20	16	4
Singapore	1	1	–
South Africa	19	14	5
Syria	1	–	1
Taiwan	1	1	–
Tanzania	3	2	1
Thailand	6	6	–
Turkey	4	2	2
Uganda	9	5	4
United Arab Emirates	7	3	4

Vietnam	4	2	2
Zair	4	3	1
Oceania	**422**	**242**	**180**
Australia	346	194	152
French Polynesia	1	1	–
New Zealand	75	47	28
Not specified	**8**	**4**	**4**

- Non-nationals having authorization to work in the country:
1995 non-nationals have authorization to work in Iceland. It should be noted that on 1 January 1994, Iceland became a member of the European Economic Area (EEA). Through the EEA Agreement, Iceland became part of a common European employment market. EEA nationals have the same right as Icelandic nationals regarding employment, remuneration and other conditions of work and employment. EEA nationals do not need visas in order to enter Iceland.

- Estimate of irregular migrants, including visa abusers, by country of origin:
Irregular migrants are estimated 5 to 10 each year.

2. Measures being taken to strengthen the promotion, protection and implemention of the human rights of migrants.

As regards the situation in Iceland, no particular problems have evolved concerning migrants requiring specific legislative or other measures from the Icelandic authorities to strengthen the protection of migrants. Thus, no measures have been taken with this objective recently.

Even though no major problems or incidents have taken place concerning e.g. discrimination based on race, colour, national, religious, linguistic or ethnic origin., there is a growing concern that clear rules should be adopted and other measures taken to prevent that people have to suffer discrimination on these grounds and to guarantee their rights. This concern can be considered to derive partly from the increasing interest of people in human rights in general.

The main existing legislation in the field of migrants applies to all foreigners in Iceland. Firstly, there is the Foreign Nationals Supervision Act, No. 45/1965, and Regulation No. 148/1965 on Supervision of Foreign Nationals. The Act was amended recently with Act No. 133/1993 in relation to Iceland's becoming a party to the Agreement on the European Economic Area. Secondly, there is the Foreigners´ Right to Work Act, No. 133/1994.

According to Article 5 of the Terms and Wages Act, No. 69/1993, amending Article 1 of the Terms and Wages Act, No. 55/1980, wages and other terms agreed upon by organized labour and employers´ associations in collective agreements shall be minimum wages and terms irrespective of sex, race, nationality or length of service, for all wages earners working in

industry and the region covered by the agreement in question. Agreements made by individual workers and employers providing for on less remuneration or worse conditions are null and void. Male and female employees shall by law receive equal wages for work of equal value.

According to a recent amendment in 1995 to the Constitution a special provision of the Constitution, Section 65, subsection 1, now stipulates expressly the basic principle that everybody shall be equal before the law and enjoy human rights without regard to sex, religion, opinion, national origin, race, colour, financial status, parentage and other status.

As regards the rights of religious minorities in Iceland, the freedom of belief and religion is protected in Sections 63 and 64 of the Constitution. Under Section 62 of the Constitution, the National Church of Iceland is the Evangelical Lutheran Church. According to the Constitution and Act No. 18/1975 on Religious Associations, people have a right to establish associations and each person is free to practice his religion by himself or in association with others, in the way most appropriate to his convictions. It is not, however, permitted to teach or perpetrate anything against sound morals and public order. No one has an obligation to belong to a religious association in Iceland. People determine for themselves whether they belong to a religious association and, if so which one. The National Register maintains a record of what religious association a person belongs to or whether he belongs to no religious association. It is permitted to found religious associations outside the National Church of Iceland without any obligation to give notice to government authorities of its establishment or operation. A religious association outside the National Church can seek registration and through this registration it obtains rights and obligations that are stated in more detail in the law.

Religious beliefs are protected by penal law without regard to which religious assiociation is involved. Parishes of the National Church, registered religious associations and the University Fund have a right to a specific percentage of taxes on income under Act No. 91/1987 on Church tax. No one is obligated to pay fees to another religious association than his own. If a person belongs to no registered religious association, the portion of his income taxes is paid to the University of Iceland.

A religious association has never been banned in Iceland and matters of dispute regarding a constitutional right of religious freedom are very rare in Icelandic judicial practice.

Section 29, subsection 4 of the Act on Primary Schools No. 66/1995 stipulates that the objectives of education and tuition and the operating procedures of primary schools shall be such as to prevent discrimination on the basis of origin, sex, residence, social class, religion or physical disability.

The Primary Schools Act does not contain any provision stating that pupils whose mother tongue is other than Icelandic should receive instruction in their mother tongue. Nor are there special provisions stating that the mother tongue of these pupils should be taught in the schools. On the other hand, efforts are made to encourage these pupils to maintain their mother tongue and culture.

A special programme of education for immigrants in general has been under way under the auspices of the Ministry of Education since the autumn of 1993. Two specialists in the education of immigrants have been in charge of the programme, which includes children in nursery schools, primary schools and secondary schools and also adult education. They advise teachers on topics such as the teaching of Icelandic, course structure, educational materials and social adjustment, and have, i.a., initiated the establishment of special reception class groups for immigrant children.

The language barrier is a common problem to most of the foreigners in the country without regard to their race, colour or ethnic origin. Therefore, measures taken by the authorities in this and other respects have aimed at solving the problems of immigrants in general. In the autumn of 1995 the Minister of Education and Cultural affairs appointed a Committee to formulate a general policy on immigrants in Iceland. The Committee did collect information from various ministries, Government institutions and other public and private bodies which deal with matters concerning immigrants to analyse whether there are particular problems in this field which must to be tackled through legislative, administrative or other measures. The Committee concluded its report in June 1997.

The Ministry of Social Affairs has published booklets in some of the languages of the people from other countries, in order to facilitate their adaptation to Icelandic society and to inform them about their rights and legal status which is no different from that of Icelanders except as far as citizenship is concerned.

An Information and Cultural Center for Foreigners was established in Reykjavik in 1994 with the task to serve people who come from other countries to live in Iceland. The center provides foreigners with necessary and practical information, such as concerning resident permits, health care, social service, insurance, the school system etc. At the center there is a list of interpreters fluent in many languages, to assist foreigners. The Center has published a leaflet introducing its functions in seven languages (Vietnamese, Polish, Tagalog, Thai language, Russian, Spanish and English).

3. Manifestations of racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination against migriants.

The Icelandic Government is not familiar with any manifestations of racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination against migrants, either in Iceland or against Icelanders in other countries. In fact, there have not been incidents or circumstances which have evolved in the recent years indicating that some specific racial, ethnic or linguistic groups or individuals belonging to them need special protection.

4. Steps wich have been taken in order to ratify international conventions in the field of migrants.

No steps have been taken in order to ratify the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrants Workers and Members of Their Families, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention concerning Migration for Employment (Revised), 1949 (No. 97), and the ILO Convention concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers, 1995 (No. 143).